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## Land and Power: Making a new map of Ireland's border

Dr Garrett Carr

### ABSTRACT

The author discusses the process behind a map of his creation, 'A View of the Border'. The map charts Ireland's north/south frontier, soon to become the United Kingdom's only land border with the European Union. Defending or questioning the legitimacy of Ireland's border is still a defining force in Ireland's politics, especially Northern Ireland's. The author takes issue with the borderline symbol on maps, suggesting the reduction of Ireland into a binary has had negative ramifications in the political discourse – contributing to a us-and-them stalemate. On the ground Ireland's border is largely invisible and almost completely permeable, the author wondered if the border could be mapped in a way that would reflect this. To identify original modes of mapping the frontier, the author travelled the borderline from end-to-end. Many of topographic elements on 'A View of the Border' do not generally appear on maps, the author explains the thinking behind the inclusion of some of these elements and discusses designing the icons used represent them. The conclusion asks if any of the creative decisions taken in 'A View of the Border' could be applied to other border regions.

### INTRODUCTION

The cartographical sign of the borderline is important to our understanding of nationhood. Through maps on classroom walls, weather

charts on television and reams of other sources we learn to recognise the shape of our homeland. Benedict Anderson calls this force 'map-as-logo,' a powerful rallying-point born into the world with the invention of print and playing a part in the formation of modern nationalism. "Instantly recognizable, everywhere visible, the logo-map penetrated deep into the popular imagination" (Anderson, 2006, p. 175). Most of Northern Ireland's outline is ocean, a maritime border, but its land border with the Republic of Ireland completes the logo. The border was created in 1922 when Ireland declared independence from Britain and Northern Ireland, in reaction, split from the newly independent nation to maintain a union with Britain. The border is a key part of Northern Ireland's identity and as such attracts loyalty but also rejection and trouble. A sustainable portion of Northern Ireland's population would like to see it erased – uniting Ireland as a single nation – while for others the borderline is a loud-proud statement for the wider world, revealing Northern Ireland as a country of its own. So, the borderline symbol is highly meaningful. It's a symbol who's value has been acted upon and reproduced away from the actual border, and often violently, in Northern Ireland's urban spaces. Many did not agree with Garret Fitzgerald, a former Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, when he asserted that dividing Ireland was a mistake, but his reason for believing so, that it has "fostered sectarianism in both parts of the island," is hard to refute (Fitzgerald, 2009, The Irish Times). Contention around the border eventually pitched Northern Ireland into the Troubles, a violent phase beginning in 1969. It was a thirty-year period of low-intensity conflict, the main players being the police, the

British Military and a range of paramilitary organisations and terrorists (McKittrick et al, 1999). The violence mostly occurred away from the border but was firmly linked to its existence.

Now, two decades after a peace accord ended the Troubles, high walls still divide Unionist and Nationalist neighbourhoods from each other. Most are in Belfast, away from the border. Meanwhile, the actual frontier is open, there are no restrictions or checks. It is mostly rural; the borderline running invisibly along hedgerows and streams. There are no customs checks or passport controls on the roads; you can easily cross the border without realising it. So it seems the borderline still has most strength as a symbol, a line on the map.

The latest factor is Northern Ireland's changing status in Europe. Recently the UK government ran a referendum, asking everyone – including the people of Northern Ireland – if they wished to remain in the European Union or leave. The decision was taken to leave, meaning in two years Ireland's border will become a EU frontier. The possible ramifications of this shift, along with the fact that a majority of Northern Ireland voters actually choose to remain in the EU, has made the border a live issue again. A hovering uncertainty about the future of the border that never entirely went away has now returned full force.

I wanted to create a map of Ireland's border that questioned the traditional cartographic representation, something that probed the borderline, rather than simply repeated the binary message; us/them, ours/theirs. It seemed to me that such binaries were enforced when a border was thought in symbolic terms. I thought it would be useful to try

to think of it as a full place instead. To be able to represent the border as a place rather than a symbol I decided it would be necessary to explore the borderland, to see it with my own eyes. I resolved to travel its whole length closely.

<< Fig\_0\_Overview\_Index\_to\_other\_figs.tif >> CAPTION: Figure 0. Overview of 'A View of the Border', additions show where figures 1 to 5 belong in the map.

The example of Tim Robinson helped bring me to this determination. In the west of Ireland Robinson has mapped the Burren and the Aran Islands. His study of the Arans also resulted in two textual tours of the islands, *Stones of Aran, Pilgrimage* (1986) and *Labyrinth* (1995). In these books he did not much discuss his mapping, perhaps to leave the way clear for the books to be seen as kinds of maps in themselves, which they were in a sense. When he turned to the drawing board his cartography style was traditional. Robinson would have nothing to gain from questioning the shape of the Arans, he has no problem with the Ordnance Survey's outline and their distribution of villages and other elements. He traced the Ordnance Survey maps to form the template for his own. He did not seek a foundational re-charting but he did want a differently filled picture, so he simply added in whichever elements of the land, previously uncharted, that he wanted to record. To find them he pulled on his hiking boots and looked. He wrote: '[It is the] nature of reality itself that I would like to image, however feebly, however smoothed out and generalised, in the texture of the map. Therefore it was

necessary to go everywhere and see everything for myself, before I had the right to represent it on my drawing' (Robinson, 1994, p. 14).

Robinson's principle of only mapping what he had witnessed himself brought me into contact with the work of Paul Carter (1987 and 1996). Carter adds an overt politics to traveling the actual soil, writing that the loss of contact with the ground was the "primary sin" of the colonist (1996, online). To Carter the problem of the colonist is that they were literarily cut-off from the ground, viewing the land on a map, from the window of a high tower or even from across oceans, via reports and columns of information. An effect of this removed relationship was that the land was viewed as a problem rather than a place. I wanted to avoid this "sin". I had to witness the terrain to better chart it but also to earn the right to chart it. Having personal contact with the terrain quickly became a central principal of my project.

Tim Robinson chose to map some of Ireland's most hallowed terrain, the Aran Islands and the Burren, areas that have attracted tourists and romantics for well over a century. Gerry Smyth (2001) suggests that for all his eloquence Robinson's work is, in the end, another dreamy elevation of Ireland's west. I chose to map the border, a terrain that is thought of in the abstract, when it is thought of at all. Even for people who travel over the border it is just a blink-and-you'll miss-it moment in their journey. People don't dawdle there.

Beginning at Carlingford Lough, the eastern end of the border, the journey took eight weeks but was not one continuous march. The longest continuous walks were no more than four days. Sticking close to the line

was important to me; I usually camped out at night and I canoed the larger stretches of water that host to the border (the journey is recounted in Carr, 2017). The frontier has many scenic sections. Its low-population has left thriving wildlife and open-country. It is in part the Troubles that created this – the border has rarely been considered a destination. Thirty years of conflict has left a shadow and the borderland has tended to be a zone of economic stagnation. From the beginning of my border walk I sensed this inactivity. The fields are small and barely farmed. Occasionally I passed rural houses located on one side of the border but only accessible from the other. Such an arrangement seems likely to have been troublesome. I might have inquired but there was no one to ask. Without exception, every house I found of this type was abandoned. Much of the frontier corridor seems inhibited in this kind of way, although perfectly tranquil. Ireland's border was never defended but rarely cuts across open land either, it follows patterns of ownership established over centuries and so it marked by the kinds of boundaries rural neighbours have, hedgerows, fences and stone walls. For about two thirds of its length the border follows rivers and streams. It passes through many fir plantations, mile after mile of hardy trees, a crop enables local councils to extract some revenue from low-quality land. If the border was really being acted upon and reproduced in Northern Ireland's urban spaces then we would be planting trees and releasing herds of cattle between Unionist and Nationalist areas of Belfast. Instead it is the border *sign* that is being acted out. As I journeyed I looked out for new ways to represent

the actual border, a way of bringing some nuance to the black line across the map.

## ELEMENTS OF 'A VIEW OF THE BORDER'

### 1: Connections

During the Troubles there were only about sixteen official road routes crossing Ireland's border. There were many other roads but they were liable to being blocked or cratered in security operations. Today all roads are back in use and there are over two hundred ways to drive from one state into the other. Walking the heath and farmland away from network roads I spotted many other border crossings; gates set in hedgerows for the convenience of farmers, stepping stones and community-built bridges span rivers, walkers' routes and muddy by-ways criss-cross the line. The border, I found, has many perforations.

I began to record the locations of these connections. To qualify as a connection, and get a place on the map, the crossing point had to be deliberate, built into existence. A natural arrangement of rocks coincidentally providing stepping-stones across a border stream would not count. The connection also had to show signs of being in use and had to be left off the Ordnance Survey 1/50,000 scale maps. This was because I wanted to record the overlooked, the unsanctioned. The most common sort of connections were openings in hedgerows, for transferring livestock and animal feed. As much of the border is water, footbridges were also common. The bridges were often simply a few nailed together



planks and linking two neighbouring homesteads – to make it more convenient to borrow sugar or milk perhaps. Some footbridges were just a single plank, called ‘foot-sticks’ in vernacular communication.

<< Fig\_1\_Map\_key.tif >> CAPTION: Figure 1. The key to elements charted in ‘A View of the Border’.

When designing icons for ‘A View of the Border’ I would attempt to reduce the elements down to their fundamental character, then create an icon that evoked it, while maintaining a broad consistency among the icons. See figure 1 for the map key, discussion of a few of the architectural icons is offered below. Connections were sometimes bridges, sometimes gates, sometimes stepping-stones or stiles. Designing a single icon to represent such variety of forms would have been difficult and may have missed the point anyway. Fundamentally, what does a connection do? The answer, it seemed to me, was that it makes a gap in the borderline, an opening that contradicts the line, so this was how I represented it. The breaks occur irregularly so the effect is not mistaken for that of a hatched line. The gaps change the meaning of the symbol here and there, showing the borderline as porous.

Unique connections stand out in the memory. Number 38 was a set of substantial stepping-stones on the Blackwater River. It was perhaps the most picturesque connection. Each boulder could have weighed a couple of tonnes. These stepping stones were only about fifty feet from a bridge, but the fresher, brighter, brickwork in the centre of

the span indicates that the bridge was probably blown up during the Troubles and was only recently been rebuilt. In the meantime, the stepping-stones got people across the border.

<< Fig\_2\_Connections.tif >> CAPTION: Figure 2. Detail from 'A View of the Border', showing connections 34 to 38. This stretch of the border is known for manor houses, with three significant examples all within a couple miles of each other and the border. However one house, Tynan Abbey, was destroyed during the Troubles.

On the border near Derry/Londonderry I found a footbridge built of the same treated planks used for garden decking. I knocked on the door of the nearest bungalow, which was in Northern Ireland, and meet a middle-aged couple. They told me that one of their sons had married a woman from across the border, in the south, and they had built a new house close by but across the border. For that reason they had built the bridge connecting their homesteads. This is was a cross-border romance given a solid shape. Of course, love is not the only thing that motivates us. It is likely that other connections were used for smuggling; an activity that may return to profitability when Northern Ireland leaves the customs union it currently has with the European Union. I found a couple of substantial bridges that were suspiciously remote from roads or even paths.

By the time I reached the western end of the border I had found seventy-seven connections. Considered together they seemed to constitute a different way of looking at a border, showing it as a place of

connection rather than division. There is something paradoxical about them, the connections are contradictions of the border but, at the same time, reveal the border. You need a border to experience the sense of connection. The line on the map divides, but on the ground it is often a meeting place.

## 2: Defensive Architecture

As I explored the border, a theme was taking shape in what I was selecting to map. I seemed to be charting some of the multi-various ways in which human beings claim a landscape. I followed this thread as it seemed to fit the subject of the border very well. The border, after all, is just such a claim, writ large. The idea of representing the border by charting smaller claims found along the line was a pleasing one.

Something of the macro could perhaps be revealed through the micro. It was helpful to crystallise this theme, I started to gain confidence in what I was doing, knowing more quickly what elements to record and which to discard. The connections fitted the theme; when someone builds a connection, a small bridge for example, over the border to their friend's land they are taking right-of-way, claiming a native's entitlement to get about their locality.

I also began charting defensive architecture along the border, forts and castles that are still on the ground, although often in ruins. The architecture of war and big statements, these elements felt as if they were in opposition to the seventy-seven connections. Broadly, they seemed to

oppose free movement, preferring to restrict it to certain people or keep it to defined routes, or just stop it altogether. They were less about connection, more about control.

<< Fig\_3\_Black\_Pigs\_Dyke.tif >> CAPTION: Figure 3. Detail from 'A View of the Border' showing sections of the Black Pig's Dyke and two new bridges.

Of course, defensive architecture has been built all over Ireland, but the borderland has been a particularly fertile zone for defensive building before and after the international frontier was created. In Ireland's north, defensive embankments were built in the Iron Age, around the 1st Century. Today each stretch is known by the same name, the Black Pig's Dyke, and many sections correspond closely with today's frontier. Figure 3 shows a stretch of Ireland's border along which several sections are still visible. I designed the symbol to attempt to represent both Iron Age defences, earthwork embankments topped with a palisade wall, and more recent stone walls. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century it was sometimes suggested that the Black Pig's Dyke was the remains of a single project, a Great Wall of Ireland between the north and south (Kane, 1909). Even a hundred years later, some Unionist politicians were making this claim (Trench Warfare, interview with Jim Wells, 2006). Despite this Unionist enthusiasm, archaeologists reject the theory. Ireland was far too politically fractured during the Iron Age for such a massive project to take shape. There were kingdoms certainly, but nothing of such scale. The embankments were imposing, made claims on

territory and were loud statements of power but were more likely to be the separate projects of local chiefdoms (Drisceoil and Condit, 2015). However, it is true that many of the earthworks are found near today's border, giving the border a deep though fractured lineage.

Ireland's border has never been fenced or walled. Iron Age embankments and, later, town walls are the only linear defences on 'A View of the Border'. All other examples of defensive architecture are strongpoints controlling small but strategically important areas. On the map they are points, not lines. The Norman invasion of Ireland left many forts and castles along what was already shaping up as a frontier. To the Normans Ireland's north was beyond the pale, a place where they could exert little control. The string of Norman forts along the border begins in the east with Narrow Water, where the border first touches ground, and ends with Greencastle, near where it ends, see figures 4 and 5 respectively. So in Norman Ireland there was a sense of an edge-land here, a frontier where a black line would one day be drawn. Later, the struggle for control between Ulster's Gaelic lords and Queen Elizabeth 1st also left marks, for example Moiry Fort, built in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century. When built it overlooked a strategic route into Ulster and now it overlooks the border, see figure 4. The plantation of Ireland brought major demographic shifts to Ireland, especially in the north. William J. Smyth has followed, in maps and texts, the slow solidification of the border in that phase and up to the 18th century. "Sharp polarities are evident in many places and at many levels, not least where the Scottish

borderers along the Fermanagh frontier faced ‘the men of Connacht’” (Smyth, 2006, p. 221).

All along the border are found castles, forts and towers, built at different times but with common purpose, all strong points in the attempt to control space. In designing the map icons I tried draw out their fundamental relatedness, using single icons to describe structures from different wars, different centuries.

During the Second World War pillboxes and observation posts were manned north of the border, close to what was now an international frontier. Then came the military response to the Troubles, watchtowers and checkpoints. The watchtowers were built on hills, shielded in steel and projecting cameras and spotlights, but the defensive line they created was line was porous and did little to stop the movement of terrorists. These structures have now been removed but I have charted their locations on my map. Figure 3 shows one checkpoint, marked OB for Operation Banner, the name of the British military’s operations in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. At the time this checkpoint guarded what was the only crossing point on the section covered in figure 3. The other roads were cratered and the bridges collapsed by the military. The two bridge icons in figure 3 denote new bridges, rebuilt recently as part of the peace process.

There is only one checkpoint on ‘A View of the Border’ that is still functional. It is south of the border and shows where immigration control officers operate spot-checks on the road and rail links between Belfast and Dublin. As can be seen on figure 4, I have used the same symbol to

chart this operation. It is an attempt to stop illegal immigration via the United Kingdom, an arrangement that could reverse when the border becomes the UK's only land border with the EU. You would not need to be terribly imaginative immigrant to realise that the best plan would be to forgo roads and public transport, instead cross the border over the fields. The immigrant who works that out will have realised something that became clear to me as I charted defensive structures for 'A View of the Border': power on Ireland's border does not take the form of lines, it comes in points. The line, as means of cartographically explaining what a frontier looks like, is found wanting.

How do points exert power over large areas? This question seemed to get at fundamental questions of how power works, the importance of the architectural statement in itself before the building's raw capabilities come into play. Border defenders have always wanted a high view, hence much of the structures mentioned above were built on vantage points, but the various powers also want to be elevated so they can themselves be seen. Erect a tower on a hill overlooking a pass and you are saying you're in charge, a claim has been made and now it is up to others to react. If they are too disorganised or frightened then the tower becomes the local embodiment of power, an orientation point in the organisation of space. In time it is just a fact of life – willingly or unwillingly it will be accommodated by the people who live in the tower's orbit. Graham Burrett (2000) showed how the power of landmarks was used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonisation of Guyana. "So constructed, the landmark can become a nodal point in the construction of the colony, a

position of relative stability in multiple fields-geographical, social and political” (p. 129).

What Burrett does not mention, perhaps because it goes without saying, is that the solidification of power through landmarks is often backed up by the threat of violence. If the statement of a tower is not quite successful then there is always the possibility of simple military force pouring forth from it, and raising hell. But much of the architecture of power can be strikingly effective without violent action. A more recent example are mobile-phone masts standing in parts of Palestine. These masts have been deployed by Israeli settlers to claim snippets of land just beyond their border. A report commissioned by Israel’s own Department of Foreign Affairs and published in March 2005 revealed the government-sponsored process of creating Israeli settlements in Palestine. Outposts were established through subterfuge. The tactic involved the building of a mobile-phone mast on Palestinian land. Then:

comes a request to supply electricity – only for the antenna. Then a cabin is placed, for the guard, and the cabin is also connected to the electricity. Then a road is paved to the place, and infrastructure for caravans is prepared. Then, one day a number of caravans arrive at the place – and an outpost is established (Sason, 2005, online).

Once a claim is made the onus is on the original inhabitant to prove it unfair. The Israeli government has spent millions of dollars providing mobile homes for the outposts discussed above. They are not military



installations, yet their construction is a kind of deployment. A mobile-phone mast is a pure landmark, pure *nodal point*, unshielded, un-lived in, a relatively clean example of the technique Burrett framed. The report reveals that sometimes the masts were not even real, playing no part in mobile communications. They were erected just to plant a claim on an area, as delicate yet meaningful as a planted flag. Once set in place, more and more structures come into their orbit. It becomes harder and harder to get the claimed land unclaimed.

I gathered the locations of defensive architecture along the border from my own surveys but also from many other sources; archaeological databases, the militaries of both north and south, and a Northern Ireland organisation called Built Heritage. When I added the information to the map I was drawing I was presented with a thick splattering of dots all along the border, each a claim, a counter-claim, a reclaim and eventual ruination or erasure, the points that helped make a line.

### 3: Landmarks

Just as I was gaining confidence in the subject matter of *A View of the Border*, any conceptual grip on the nature of power began slipping away from me. It was nebulous, shifting and seemed as much about cultural weight – or soft power – as bricks and cannons. Power could be imbued in all sorts of landmarks, anything that was a point of “relative stability in multiple fields,” as Burnett termed it (p. 129). This realisation changes the way we look at landscape, or at least it did for me. Suddenly so much

of Ireland's built heritage and culture seemed to deserve a place on the map. This mode of thought was rather dangerous; attempting to chart every human mark that represents any sort of power structure would be a never-ending project. However, 'A View of the Border' charts some of the marks left by soft power and the final section of this essay describes the rationale for three of them.

<< Fig\_4\_Carlingford.tif >> CAPTION: Figure 4. Detail from 'A View of the Border', Carlingford Lough and part of South Armagh.

As I travelled the border I always wanted to stay as close as possible to the line, a principle inspired by Tim Robinson, as mentioned above. So whenever the border cut across wide bodies of water I always endeavoured to follow it by canoe. For my first day on the border I paddled the length of Carlingford Lough. It was during that survey that I was struck by the sense of mission in a lighthouse. Haulbowline lighthouse in the mouth of the lough was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It has a striking sculptural quality. The rock it stands on is usually hidden by the waves, so the lighthouse seems to stand directly on the water. The brickwork is tightly packed, leaving not a single cranny for waves to pick at and weaken the structure. While paddling around the massive tower my definition of defensive architecture widened a little. A lighthouse was surely defensive, although its enemies were fog, storms and hidden rocks. Lighthouses seem to be points of stability in cultural terms too: built as part of a huge project to secure shipping around Ireland and Britain,

lighthouses symbolises the power of the scientific revolution. An expression of a new rational age, a lighthouse shows how we can take on nature and win.

<< Fig\_5\_Londonderry.tif >> CAPTION: Figure 5. Detail from 'A View of the Border', Derry/Londonderry. Includes the bars Sandino's and the Rising Sun in nearby town of Greysteel.

Bars or pubs are multi-functional social hubs. During the Troubles certain bars along the border became associated with one community or another. This was sometimes all it took for a pub to become the site of a shooting. In 1993 eight people were killed when two men opened fire on the crowd in the Rising Sun Bar, merely because it was perceived as a Catholic bar. This bar is charted in figure 5. Other bars really seem to have become hardened, developing reputations as headquarters of one armed faction or another. For example, the Three Steps Inn, in Armagh, was known as a meeting place for members of the Irish Republican Army. An undercover soldier name Robert Nairac was kidnapped from its carpark in 1977. Bloodstains, teeth and hair were later discovered but no other trace of his body was ever found (Dillon, 1999, p. 153).

Today, borderland bars still play into political events. Sandino's in Derry/Londonderry (see figure 5) is a centre for broadly left-wing political activism in the city. I visited Sandino's near the end of my border journey and found that a politically active crowd still frequent it, although more interested in the wider world than Northern Ireland's longstanding

constitutional questions. The example of Sandino's confirmed for me that bars should have a place on the map. This bar was the HQ for a long running set of protest and vigils aimed at harassing an American defence firm that had offices in the city (McCann, 2008, p. 3). The protests were successful; the firm was forced to leave the city in 2010 (Irish Times). Of course, not every bar is a hotbed of activism. I visited one in Armagh that was trying to withdraw from any role a pub may potentially have in political discourse. The Gap O' the North sits directly on the borderline, you can pay for your drink in Euros or British Sterling, but a sign hanging above the bar counter says, 'please do not discuss politics'.

<< Fig\_6\_loughfoyle.tif >> CAPTION: Figure 6. Detail from 'A View of the Border', Lough Foyle, including the baseline to Ireland's ordnance survey.

A third and final example: The map charts trigonometry points on and close to the border, remnants of the Ordnance Survey's mapping of Ireland, a project begun in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In themselves the trig points are unassuming, stumpy concrete pillars, about four feet tall, but they are the relics of an enormous exercise. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century mapping of Ireland has in many minds become associated with military subjugation and colonisation of Ireland. It is true that the skills and technology used to chart Ireland were developed by the military, and many of the staff were former soldiers, but this image may loom large due to a single piece of art, not historiography. *Translations* (1981) is a play by Brian Friel. It is set in the early 1840s and in it a band of surveyors, armed like soldiers, are

travelling County Donegal changing placenames from Irish to English – a sort of cultural vandalism that soon turns into violence. In reality, the surveyors were not armed and, at the time, cartography was beginning to be widely seen as a useful endeavour. The surveys were becoming everybody's business, going from glorified military reconnaissance to a universal cartographic provider (Andrews, 1974, p. 3). It was in fact landowners seeking fairness in their land tax rates who lobbied for the survey in the first place (Doherty, 2004, p. 14). Before the end of the 19th century the Ordnance Survey was the key resource used in court procedures over questions of land ownership and when the system reached fullest development there were eighteen different ways of describing property boundaries (Andrews, 1974, p. 54).

Ownership and taxation: two pillars of a modern state. Both are present in the four-foot relics that dot Ireland and the borderland. The first four trigonometry points in Ireland happen to run parallel to the border, where it divides Lough Foyle, they can be seen on figure 6. Three of these landmarks remain to this day. They were constructed in 1827, not long after Haulbowline was first lit. The Lough Foyle pillars were the baseline, from where the first triangulations of Ireland's Ordnance Survey were made. Each pedestal had a notched wire sealed into the cap, creating four exact pinpoints. With ten-foot lengths of brass and iron, called compensation bars, the surveyors worked over two years to measure the eight-mile line (Hewitt, 2010. p. 254). In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the distance was re-measured in using electronic equipment and it was found to be only one inch off. The baseline had been measured with an accuracy

never achieved anywhere before. “What a triumph it is for the combined exertions of art and science,” wrote the head of the team at the time (Quoted in Hewitt, 2010. p. 254). The new baseline was then triangulated with points on mountaintops to produce new baselines and further triangulations. The cartographical organisation of Ireland had begun.

## Concluding Remarks

A version of ‘A View of the Border’ was used to illustrate a book about the border, *The Rule of the Land: Walking Ireland’s Border* (Carr, 2017). I have also exhibited versions of the map and found it interesting to watch people study it. Some found the map intriguing and spend many minutes examining it in detail. As mentioned, the border is a live political issue and often an emotional one too, attracting loyalty or rejection in a way that is almost instinctual. Some of those studying the map may have been merely seeking evidence in support of their entrenched political views. The Trouble’s watchtowers can be a persuasive way to make the border seem brutal and artificially maintained. The Black Pig’s Dyke, on the other hand, gives it ancient ancestry. The seventy-seven connections may seem to probe the border in a way some may find disagreeable, questioning the border, testing it for weakness. While others may find the existence of the connections a reassuring statement, showing that the border is a functional place and bound for longevity. One likes to think that thin readings of the map only happen when the map is read briskly. Including lighthouses, trigonometry points and pubs among the forts and

checkpoints may have caused viewers to make unexpected links. Perhaps the symbols most effective at inducing fresh thinking are those that are in themselves the freshest, pressing the reader to expand their visual vocabulary, whether they want to or not. In these terms, the connections may be the most effective element. Connections are sometimes clustered, and sometimes thinly spread, by disrupting the border here and there the overall effect may be to suggest human unpredictability and irrepressibility. The white background flows through, hinting at ground level activity getting on with things regardless of a mere sign. The connections may show us that the border is not just a symbol, but also a real place where things happen.

Connections could perhaps offer a language for charting other borders on maps, revealing the difference between firmly closed frontiers and those that are in fact open, whatever the borderline implies. The latter situation often creates something that is more borderland than borderline, a wide but blurred region where two countries meet. This is certainly the case with Ireland's border. This status is currently under some threat but, hopefully, Northern Ireland's exit from the European Union will not lead to a new generation of barriers on the border. A connection-focused map of Europe would certainly be an accurate way of charting the nations that are within the EU and the European Customs Union, and perhaps 1985's Schengen Agreement too – there are varying degrees to which European countries are integrated. It is an important part of the design that the background colour flows through the connections, filling the space given and reflecting the actual condition of

the border on the ground. In this model the distinct coding of nations into different colours – a common style with maps – would be less sharp along the edges, the countries perhaps diffusing into each other. It is a mode of describing borders that would view them as negotiable and human, rather than a definite elemental, like a coastline.

But with the United Kingdom about to leave the EU it is unlikely that state-sponsored cartography will start meddling with the representation of Europe's borders. Some European governments are currently having difficulty keeping their populations persuaded of the worth of the EU project. A soft border map of Europe may cause negative reaction. A Europe map that represent borders as sites of binding rather than dividing would be a true as any other – perhaps truer – but some of us like to think of our borders as sharp, clean and simple. This is despite the fact that if you go see the border ground, and walk it perhaps, you'll find the line is rarely sharp, if you can find it at all.



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